

EXPOSITION OF SENTIMENTS.

ADOPTED BY THE PENNSYLVANIA YEARLY MEETING OF
PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS.

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To the Friends of Pure and Undeified Religion, and to all Seekers after Truth, of whatever name or denomination, the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends sendeth Greeting:

DEAR FRIENDS:—Having been led, as we trust, through obedience to the revelations of truth, to form a Religious Association upon principles always too little regarded and often trampled under foot by professing Christians and popular sects, we are constrained to address you in explanation of our leading sentiments, purposes, plans, and hopes. If, as we believe, the basis of our organization, and the arrangements we propose for the culture of man's religious powers, are in harmony with the Divine laws, and adapted to the wants of human nature and the demands of the present age, it is certainly incumbent upon us to diffuse the knowledge thereof as widely as possible; and if, on the other hand, "the light that is in us be darkness," it is proper that we should invoke your earnest efforts to redeem us from our errors, and turn our feet into the highway of holiness and truth. We, therefore, ask your serious and unprejudiced consideration of the matters presented in this Exposition, so that, whether you shall accept or reject our propositions, your conclusions may minister to your own peace of mind and growth in the love and practice of the truth.

In our efforts to apply the principles of Christianity to daily life, and to social customs and institutions which we deemed subversive of individual and national morality, as well as in conflict with the laws of God, we encountered the hostility of the popular sects, to one or another of which most of us belonged, and to which we were bound by ties that grew with our growth and strengthened with our strength.

Mingling with the chime of church bells and with the tones of the preacher's voice, or breaking upon the stillness of our religious assemblies, we heard the clank of the slave's chain, the groans of the wounded and dying on the field of bloody strife, the noise of drunken revelry, the sad cry of the widow and the fatherless, and the wail of homeless, despairing poverty, driven

"By foul Oppression's ruffian gluttony
Forth from life's plenteous feast ;"

and when, in obedience to the voice of God, speaking through the holiest sympathies and purest impulses of our Godlike humanity, we sought to arouse our countrymen to united efforts for the relief of human suffering, the removal of giant wrongs, the suppression of foul iniquities, we found the Church, in spite of her solemn professions, arrayed against us, blocking up the path of reform with her serried ranks, prostituting her mighty influence to the support of wickedness in high places, smiling complacently upon the haughty oppressor, "justifying the wicked for a reward," maligning the faithful Abdiels who dared to stand up for the truth and to testify against popular crimes—thus traitorously upsetting the very foundations of the Religion she was sacredly bound to support and exemplify, and doing in the name of Christ deeds at which humanity shuddered, obliterating her indignant blushes only with the tears that welled up from the deeps of her great, loving heart.

For a time, though not without deep mortification and discouragement, we bore this appalling delinquency, thinking in our short-sightedness that it was mainly the result of a temporary mistake, and not of an incurable leprosy tainting the whole body. In the "patience of hope" we toiled on, seeking to reform alike the Church and the world, and deeming it certain that the former would speedily abandon her false and sinful position, and "come up to the help of the Lord" against the hosts of unrighteousness and oppression. Our hopes in this respect were doomed to a sad and bitter disappointment. The leaders of the Church, instead of retracing the false step which they had taken, grew more and more hostile to the cause of Christian Reform, while there was not found in the body enough of moral principle to reject their counsels and repudiate their impious claims to a Divine warrant for their criminal apostacy. Inflated with spiritual pride, and claiming to be the anointed expounders of God's will, they mocked at Philanthropy as no part of religion, exalted in its place the Dagon of man-made Disciplines,

argued obedience to the decisions of Yearly Meetings or other ecclesiastical assemblies, as the sum of human obligation, bade us stifle the gushing sympathies which link us to our kind, and passively "wait God's time" for the removal of the evils that afflict and curse our race; as if God had not revealed his purpose of doing this work by human instrumentality—as if there were times when deeds of charity and mercy are offensive in His sight—as if the cry of suffering Humanity and the emotions it stirs within us were not a sufficient revelation of His will, and we were bound to wait in listless inactivity for some supernatural or miraculous manifestation of His authority and power! Alas! how many have thus waited, until at last the spiritual ear has become too dull and heavy to vibrate under the gentle tones of the "still, small voice," and the heart so hard and cold, that it has ceased to beat at the cry of mortal woe! Superstition has woven around their souls her impenetrable veil, excluding the warm sunlight of God's presence, paralyzing their moral energies, and leaving their holiest sympathies to stagnate for lack of use; thus unfitting them for the work the good Father sets before them in common with all His children, and defeating the great end and purpose of their earthly life.

When we refused to obey the mandate of our ecclesiastical rulers, choosing to hearken to the voice of God rather than unto the voice of man, we found our worst foes in our own religious households; the rod of ecclesiastical power was lifted above our heads, and some of us were made to understand that excommunication was the price to be paid for the exercise of that liberty which Jesus proclaimed as the birthright of his disciples. We might have devoted our energies, to the acquisition of wealth, and, in imitation of the example of many who stood high in the Church, entered into close relations with men devoid of religious principle in the pursuit of that object, and no voice of censure or reproof would have been lifted against us; but when we associated with noble men and women, not of our sect, for the purpose of abolishing slavery, war, intemperance, and other crying abominations, and our zeal for humanity made us indifferent to the *forms* of the Church, though more than ever alive to the great principles she had so long professed to believe and revere, we were treated as offenders; and the strange spectacle was witnessed of bodies, claiming to be God's representatives on earth, excluding from their pale, men and women of blameless lives for loving peace, purity and freedom so devotedly, as to be willing to co-operate with all whose hearts prompted them to labor for the promotion of those heavenly virtues. Thus were the great and en-

nobling principles of our common humanity subordinated to sectarian shibboleths, and that Divine charity, which is the essence of the God-like, and the sum of every virtue in man, narrowed down to the dimensions of a particular creed, or smothered under the petty limitations of speculative theology.

Driven thus to choose between our loyalty to sect and our allegiance to God, and feeling still the need of some outward helps in the cultivation of the religious sentiment, we were naturally led to investigate the whole subject of religious organization, its nature, uses and sphere, and the source and extent of its powers. The result of our inquiries is a clear conviction, that Churches, however high their pretensions of authority derived from God, are only human organizations, and the repositories of only such powers as may have been rightfully conferred upon them by the individuals of whom they are composed, or derived from the laws of our social nature. It is time that this truth, so long obscured by the sorcery of priestcraft, were clearly understood and boldly proclaimed. Too long have the common people been deluded with the idea that the Church holds a mysterious *organic* relation to the Infinite,—a relation distinct from that existing between the soul and its Creator, and conferring special powers and prerogatives. Perhaps no error has done more than this to debase and enslave the mind of man, to fetter his godlike powers, and make him the ready instrument of superstition and priestcraft. It is the most vicious element of Popery, from which our Protestant sects are not yet delivered. Our religion, which should make us free and self-reliant, willing to bend the knee only to God, as he stands revealed to our own consciousness, withered by the touch of this superstition, becomes, in the hands of ambitious and designing men, the instrument of our degradation, the symbol of littleness, meanness, bigotry and hypocrisy. The Romish Church sets up for herself a claim of absolute infallibility, and the various Protestant sects, professing to deride *her* pretensions, yet tax our credulity scarcely less. From the Episcopal Church, with her imposing ritual and elaborate ceremonials, down to modern Quakerism, with its professed abjuration of all forms, its rustic garb and look of "meek simplicity," all seem deluded with the idea that the Church, being made after a Divine pattern, is supernaturally preserved from error. Even the Quaker regards the decision of his Yearly Meeting with a superstitious reverence scarcely inferior to that which the Catholic awards to the decrees of the Pope and the Cardinals. Do his reason and common sense suggest that the Yearly Meeting has decided erroneously or unjustly, he banishes the thought as little less than im-

pious, becomes silent if not acquiescent, and mayhap lays his reason and common sense a sacrifice on the altar of the Church. Poor man! let him be once fairly convinced that ecclesiastical bodies, however sacred their professions, however worthy of esteem within their legitimate sphere, are yet only *human*, and without authority to bind the conscience even of the humblest of God's children, and he will no longer dare to offer such a sacrifice, to dishonor his Creator by debasing his own exalted powers.

It would be easy to show that this claim of supernatural power, on the part of the organized Church, is at war with the whole genius and spirit of Christianity as exhibited in the life and teachings of Jesus, and without warrant in the writings of the Apostles and primitive Christians, as well as subversive of individual rights and responsibilities. Jesus nowhere indicated an intention to organize a Church clothed with such power. Indeed, it does not appear from his recorded words that he even contemplated any organization whatever of those who should embrace his doctrines. He specified no such work as incumbent upon those whom he sent forth as witnesses of the truth, but left them to adopt such instrumentalities as might seem to them adapted to promote the object of their mission. The Apostles did indeed organize Churches, but they did not pretend that they were framed after a Divinely prescribed pattern, still less that they were clothed with a supernatural power. "It was not," says a learned writer,* "until the number of personal followers of Jesus increased by thousands, and *the need of some organization began to be felt*, that any thing like the institution of a distinct and permanent religious society appears to have been definitely contemplated. And then *nothing more was done, than was necessary to that present exigency*. Thus the whole institution of the Church at Jerusalem grew up by degrees, *as one step after another was called for by a succession of circumstances altogether peculiar*." A religious periodical of high authority in matters of ecclesiastical history, † testified, some years since, as follows: "Men have clung as with a dying grasp to a few shreds of ancient tradition, and deemed it sacrilege to meddle with these consecrated relics. They have attached a peculiar sacredness to their own constitutions, councils, ordinances, creeds and decisions, as if they rested on Divine right and apostolic authority. . . . The beautiful theories of Church government, devised with so much care and put together with so much skill and art, have, we are sure, no manner of resemblance to the

* Leonard Bacon, in his "Manual for Young Church Members."

† *The Christian Spectator*, Sept., 1833.

Churches mentioned in the Acts and Epistles. The primitive Christians, could they come among us, would be not a little surprised to hear their assemblies, gathered by stealth for worship, with or without particular standing officers, referred to as the models after which the superstructure of denominational Churches is supposed to be fashioned. They were simple-hearted men and women, exposed to continual persecution, and bound together in Christian love; forming and modifying their regulations *exactly as was needed*; never once dreaming that they or their successors were bound to a single system by some great code, provided by Divine authority. . . . The reason of associating together was, to further this great end, mutually to enliven the feelings of devotion, strengthen the principles of piety, and aid in, and urge to, the discharge of duty. . . . Some things were practised in some Churches and not in others. Some officers existed in one and not in another; some met in one place and not in another; and *all had a right to do whatever might be conducive to the general good.*"

We have dwelt at some length on this point, because we deem it of fundamental importance. This claim of organic communion with God lies at the root of many evils in the Churches around us, and hence we desire to make our denial of its validity as emphatic as possible. We would impress upon the minds of all whom our voice may reach, the truth, that there is no mysterious alchemy whereby a company of men, mean and selfish as individuals, are transmuted into a holy body; no Divine afflatus vouchsafed to them in the mass, superseding the necessity of personal conformity to the will of God. Such a claim is the acme of superstition and imposture. It is amazing that it should for so long a period have deceived and befooled the nations! When will the people learn that there is nothing Divine, nothing too sacred for investigation, in the artificial arrangements and prescribed formalities of sects? Alas! what multitudes join the popular Churches, submitting to their rites and paying the expenses of their administration, deluding themselves meanwhile with the idea that they are thus ensuring their eternal salvation, even though their daily lives are defiled by sordid and debasing acts, and they scarcely lift a finger or breathe one honest aspiration for their own or the world's moral improvement!

Our inquiries into the nature and uses of Religious Organization have also brought us to the conclusion, that the Churches around us have made a vital mistake in demanding uniformity of belief in respect to scholastic theology, ordinances, rites and forms, as a condition of religious fellowship and the basis of associated effort. It would hardly be

possible to exaggerate the evils resulting from this mistake. It has led the Church into dissensions, hypocrisy and all uncharitableness, and instead of promoting a manly, vigorous and healthful piety, which ever manifests itself in works of practical benevolence and would make her a burning and a shining light in the presence of surrounding darkness, it narrows the scope of her vision, dwarfs the intellect, smothers the heart, and makes her the purveyor of traditions and shams, a covert for meanness and treachery, and a hiding-place for the perpetrators and apologists of popular wickedness. It reverses the arrangements proposed by Jesus and his early followers, putting that first which should be last, the incidental in place of the primary, the temporary in place of the eternal. Jesus enjoins it upon his hearers to “seek *first* the kingdom of God and His *righteousness* ;” but the popular Church practically tells us, on pain of eternal perdition, to seek first of all the *theology* of that kingdom, assuring us, with impious tongue, that if we only master that, get its different parts properly arranged and labelled, and learn to believe them, however inconsistent with each other, and contrary to our reason and common sense, the *righteousness* may safely enough be left to take care of itself! Instead of requiring as the evidence of our piety the “fruits” demanded in the Gospel of Jesus, it sneers at “good works” as “carnal” and inefficacious, bids us mind our catechisms, disciplines and confessions of faith ; to come regularly to its assemblies, and worship according to its prescribed forms ! It is no wonder that politicians, bent upon schemes of selfish aggrandizement, mock at the Higher Law, and declare their own oppressive statutes a finality, when the Church is found thus corrupt and apostate. No marvel that insatiate Wealth tramples upon lowly Poverty ; that War’s “red thunders” reverberate round the world ; that Drunkenness counts its victims by tens of thousands ; that Land Monopoly grinds humanity in the dust ; that Lust is doing his work of defilement and shame with impunity ; that immortal beings are driven to their daily toil under the lash, and even sold in the shambles, when the Church proffers absolution for such crimes upon terms so easy of fulfilment.

The natural counterpart of this false and superstitious devotion to creeds and forms is an unnatural sourness and melancholy—a Pharisaical spirit, which frowns upon amusements as an offence to God, and which would cover the face of society with a sanctimonious gloom as repugnant to Religion as to unperverted human nature. The victims of this spirit converse about religion, not in manly and natural tones, indicative of sincerity and earnestness, but in a whining, canting man-

ner, as if it were a burden hard to be borne, but which they reluctantly consent to carry during their mortal life, as the only means of eternal salvation ! We are persuaded that the exhibitions of this spirit on the part of the Church have produced incalculable mischief, by exciting the prejudices of the young against *all* Religion as necessarily of an ascetic character, and by placing amusements beyond the pale of Christian influence, thus making them liable to excesses which might otherwise be avoided. The Christian, of all other persons, should not be of a sad countenance, but ever cheerful and hopeful in his demeanor, making the very atmosphere he breathes a witness of the serene joy that dwells in his heart. No false idea of sanctity, no superstitious or fanatical "worry" about his soul, should he ever suffer to make his presence distasteful and unwelcome to the young.

We cannot undertake to particularize all the errors of principle and practice in the popular Churches, which our investigations have revealed to us ; but there is one more which we must not pass in silence. We allude to that vicious and despotic feature in the organization of most of them, which, beginning in the subordination of the individual to the local Church, or to Elders, Overseers, or other officers thereof, ends in the subjection of local bodies to some larger assembly or central power. There are, indeed, some Churches which have attempted to abolish this system, but they are still too much bound by usage to practices inconsistent with their theories. Experience, as well as observation, has taught us that local organizations should in the first place be formed upon principles which will offer the best possible safeguard to the equal rights of the individual members, and discourage tyranny, whether of the many or the few ; and, in the next place, that they should never allow any other body, however numerous or imposing, to exercise authority over them. The forms of Church organization, instead of being such as are suggested by the ideas of individual freedom and responsibility which pervade the teachings of Jesus, would seem to have been borrowed from anti-Christian and despotic systems of civil government, whereof force is the vital and controlling element. Under such forms, religious tyranny, always difficult of repression, is sure to spring up into a vigorous life. It would be easy to illustrate this truth by a reference to the history of any of those Churches in which the affiliated and subordinating system of government prevails, but the experience of many of our number naturally leads us to point to the Society of Friends as a warning against this lamentable evil. The setting apart of ministers as a distinct order of persons, and for life ; the appointment of Elders to sit

in judgment upon the services of the Ministry, and to determine officially what is and what is not inspiration; the subjection of individual liberty to official dictation; the subordination of Preparative to Monthly, of Monthly to Quarterly, of Quarterly to Yearly Meetings; all this affords a covert for despotic authority. It is an arrangement whereby the few are enabled to control the many, and to carry into successful operation their plans for keeping the Church popular with the world, while she is trampling upon her own most vital principles, and obstinately refusing to do the work for which she was originally established. It aggravates, moreover, all the other evils which have crept into the body, and renders the work of reform extremely difficult, if not impossible.

But while we thus earnestly deny the claims of Religious Associations to Divine authority, and maintain that they form no exception to the rule, that "institutions are made for man, not man for institutions," and while we would fearlessly expose all that is wrong in existing Churches, we do not therefore repudiate such associations as necessarily evil. Founded upon right principles, adjusted to the wants of our social nature, within their legitimate sphere as the servants and helpers, not the masters of the soul, as a means and not an end, we esteem them of great importance. It is only when they interpose between our consciences and God, assuming to tell us authoritatively how much and what we must believe, and virtually trampling under foot the right of private judgment, that our manhood prompts us to reject them. The mistakes which men have made in their efforts to realize the benefits of Religious Association, however strange and even preposterous they may appear to us at this advanced period of the world's history, were only the incidents of Humanity imperfectly informed and developed. They should not therefore discourage us, still less lead us into other errors at the opposite extreme. Men have also made great mistakes in science, and in things pertaining to physical life—in astronomy, chemistry, and the mechanic arts, and even in agriculture; and it would be no more absurd to urge these mistakes as a reason for abandoning all associated effort in such matters, than it would be to allege the similar blunders into which men have fallen in regard to Religion, and the abuses growing out of them, as a reason why we should resist the strong impulse of our nature which prompts us to combine our efforts for the promotion of piety and good morals. Past errors and present imperfections, instead of affording an argument against organization, are only illustrations of its necessity, as a means whereby the strong may help the weak, the highly cultivated soul minister to the edification of those less enlightened,

and social influence become the aid and support of individual virtue. Beavers do not more naturally combine to build their habitations, than men and women, inspired by a common love of God and Humanity, and a common thirst for religious excellence, mingle and combine their individual efforts for the promotion of pure and undefiled religion among themselves and throughout the world.

In forming *The Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends*, we have followed the instincts of our moral and social nature, and acted upon the settled conviction, that such an organization was necessary to our highest efficiency in the work which our Heavenly Father has given us to do. We seek not to diminish, but to intensify, in ourselves the sense of individual responsibility—not to escape from duty, but to aid one another in its performance—to lift up before all who may be influenced by our words or actions a high standard of moral and religious excellence—to commit ourselves before the world as the friends of righteousness and truth, and as under the highest obligations to labor for the redemption of mankind from every form of error and sin.

It has been our honest endeavor to avoid, if possible, the mistakes into which previous organizations have so generally fallen, and especially those radical errors which are pointed out in this address. To this end we have made our association as simple as possible, having done little more than to provide for an annual assembly. We claim for this organization no other powers than such as we ourselves have conferred upon it in consistency with our own and others' individual freedom. We make no draft upon the veneration of our fellow-men for any arrangement that we have adopted, or may adopt hereafter. Veneration is due only to God, and to those eternal principles of Rectitude, Justice and Love, of which He is the embodiment.

We have set forth no forms nor ceremonies; nor have we sought to impose upon ourselves or others a system of doctrinal belief. Such matters we have left where Jesus left them, with the conscience and common sense of the individual. It has been our cherished purpose to restore the union between Religion and Life, and to place works of goodness and mercy far above theological speculations and scholastic subtleties of doctrine. Creed-making is not among the objects of our association. Christianity, as it presents itself to our minds, is too deep, too broad, and too high, to be brought within the cold propositions of the theologian. We should as soon think of bottling up the sunshine for the use of posterity, as of attempting to adjust the free and universal principles taught and exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth to the angles of

a man-made creed. Churches which undertake this impious and impracticable work doom themselves thereby to barrenness and death. Instead of being warmed and animated by that living faith which "works by love" and overcomes the world, they lapse into bigotry and intolerance, and their formularies, having no life in themselves, become at length mere petrifications, fossil remains of ideas, which, however significant once, have no longer any adaptation to the condition of the race. It is sad to behold a Church, with Christ's name upon its brow, turning away from the wells of immortal truth, and clinging with superstitious pertinacity and veneration to the shell of an ancient creed, or the letter of an ancient Discipline, from which the original soul long since took its flight; swift to frown upon the slightest departure from its forms and theories, but slow to utter a testimony against a popular sin; ever zealous in tithing "mint, anise and cummin," but heavy of step and slow of speech when the great interests of Humanity are at stake.

Our terms of membership are at once simple, practical and catholic. If we may be said to have a test, it is one which applies to the heart and the life, not to the head nor to any of its speculations. Our platform is broad as Humanity, and comprehensive as Truth. We interrogate no man as to his theological belief; we send no Committees to pry into the motives of those who may desire to share the benefits of our Association; but open the door to all who recognize the Equal Brotherhood of the Human Family, without regard to sex, color or condition, and who acknowledge the duty of defining and illustrating their faith in God, not by assent to a creed, but by lives of personal purity, and works of beneficence and charity to mankind. If, by any possibility, there should be found here and there a sincere inquirer after truth, who may not feel himself included in this invitation to membership, we shall still bid him welcome to our assemblies, and listen with patience to whatever his highest convictions may prompt him to offer. We do not seek to bind our Association together by external bands, nor by agreement in theological opinions. Identity of object, oneness of spirit in respect to the practical duties of life, the communion of soul with soul in a common love of the beautiful and true, and a common aspiration after moral excellence,—these are our bond of union; and when these shall die out in our hearts, nothing will remain to hold us together; and those who shall come after us will not be subjected to the trouble of tearing down a great ecclesiastical edifice, constructed by our hands, before they can make provision for the supply of their own religious wants.

The name of our Association is suggestive of its history and principles. As a sign of our adherence to the great moral testimonies which the Society of Friends has so long professed, as well as for historical reasons, we have adopted in part the name chosen by Fox, Penn, and other reformers of a past generation, for the Societies which they founded, and which, we regret to say, have in our day widely departed from the spirit and principles of those illustrious men. The term "*Progressive*" is intended as a recognition of the fact, that our knowledge of truth is limited, and as an indication of an honest purpose on our part to "go on unto perfection," and to avail ourselves from time to time of whatever new light may be shed upon our path. Our meetings are at present conducted very much like those of the Society of Friends, except that they are not ruled by Elders, and that we have among us no privileged class called Ministers. We welcome alike the word of exhortation, the voice of prayer, and the song of praise and thanksgiving, whichever may well up from the "inner fulness" of the devoted heart; and if at any time words shall be uttered that appear to us to savor not of life but of contention and speculation, while we may feel called upon to speak our own sentiments with freedom, we hope not to be found denying the liberty of speech to others. Some may fear that liberty so unrestricted may lead to disorder and confusion, but we are persuaded that gentleness and forbearance are more potent than official dictation, and that the instinctive sense of right and wrong, in the breast of even a misguided and obtrusive man, will afford the best safeguard of propriety and order in our assemblies.

As a Yearly Meeting, we disclaim all disciplinary authority, whether over individual members or local Associations. We shall, from time to time, declare our sentiments on such subjects as may demand our attention; but they will be armed with no other force than that which our moral influence may impart, or which may belong to the nature of truth when earnestly and honestly spoken. It will be our aim to cherish freedom of thought and speech, on every subject relating to man's highest welfare. In saying this, we have no mental reservations to mock the earnest seeker after truth. We have no thunderbolts to launch at those whose perceptions of truth lead them to different conclusions from those of the majority; no edicts of excommunication to scare the soul from its researches; no sanctimonious scowl to dart at him who carries the torch of free inquiry into the very holy of holies. We know of no question too sacred for examination, nor in respect to which human reason should yield to human authority, however ancient or venerable.

Our organization is formed upon such principles, that while the body will not be responsible for the acts of individuals, so, on the other hand, individuals and minorities may avoid responsibility for any acts of the body which they do not approve, by recording their votes against such acts, or, if they think the case demands it, by a protest. It will, moreover, be the right of any individual to withdraw from the Association at any moment, without being required to give reasons for so doing, and without being subjected to censure on the part of the meeting.

Believing that local Associations, similar in their principles and aims to ours, would meet the wants of multitudes at the present day, and that they would be likely to accomplish great good, we hope to see such established in every community where a sufficient number of persons are found ready for the work. The men and women who are engaged in the various moral reforms of the day, and who have become weary of the prevalent sectarianism, might, we believe, gain strength for their special labors by establishing regular meetings on the First day of the week, for mutual edification and improvement, for an interchange of the sympathies growing out of common pursuits and trials, and for the cultivation of their moral and religious powers. The principle of human fraternity would be thereby strengthened among them, and their children be preserved from many unhealthful influences, and prepared to meet the full responsibilities of life in a spirit becoming to the age in which their lot has been cast. Surely, these are objects worthy of our earnest thought and most careful attention. Our province is not that of iconoclasts alone. We must build as well as destroy. If there are evil institutions to be overthrown and pernicious customs to be uprooted, so also is there need of a new social fabric, of which righteousness and peace are to be the foundations. If there are vices to be done away, so also are there virtues to be promoted; if there are corrupt trees to be hewn down and cast into the fire, so also are there plants of godliness to be trained, and flowers of heavenly beauty and fragrance to be nurtured. And in this work we must help each other, not occasionally and incidentally alone, but regularly and systematically. The arrangements for meetings should in every case be adapted to the peculiar wants and tastes of the communities in which they are respectively held, care being taken to keep forms subordinate to works of practical goodness and beneficence. It is neither necessary nor desirable that one meeting should be an exact copy of another. Adhering closely to fundamental principles, there will still be scope for a variety of modes and forms.

The local Associations should do more than hold weekly meetings.

They should regard it a sacred duty to provide for the visitation and help of the poor in their respective neighborhoods, to lend their sympathy and encouragement to such as are borne down under heavy trials, and to afford prompt and efficient aid in every right effort for the promotion of Temperance, Peace, Anti-Slavery, Education, the Equal Rights of Woman, &c. ; that thus the public may be convinced that the Religion they seek to diffuse and establish is not an aggregation of mysteries, abstractions, and unmeaning forms, but a Religion for practical, everyday use, whose natural tendency is to fructify the conscience, intensify the sense of moral responsibility, purify and ennoble the aims of men, and thus to make society wiser, better, and happier. Such Associations, moreover, ought to regard it as their special function to cultivate and develope the religious sentiment among their members, and, so far as possible, in the community generally. For this purpose they would do well to establish libraries, in which the works of eminent anti-sectarian writers upon moral, ethical, and religious subjects might become accessible to all classes, especially to the young.

Such Associations would naturally communicate, by letter or otherwise, with the Yearly Meeting, each giving that body the results of its own peculiar experience, and receiving in return the experiences of others, with such suggestions as the Yearly Meeting, upon a careful comparison of the whole, may be qualified to make. The various Yearly Meetings may also strengthen one another's hands by fraternal correspondence and counsel ; and thus, without ecclesiastical authority or domination on the part of any, the whole body of believers in practical Christianity throughout the country may be cemented together in Christian love, and prepared to labor in harmony for the redemption of mankind from every evil and false way, and for the establishment of universal righteousness, purity, and peace. A Church thus united would wield a moral power like that of the Apostles and immediate followers of Jesus, and the means by which it would conquer the world are those which an Apostle has described : " BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE, BY LONG-SUFFERING, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY LOVE UNFEIGNED, BY THE ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ON THE RIGHT HAND AND ON THE LEFT."

Dear Friends ! are these ideas of a Church Utopian ? Are we dreamers and enthusiasts ? or is the day foretold by ancient prophets and bards beginning to dawn upon our darkness and to light the dull horizon with its reviving rays ? Are we always to walk amid shadows and shams ? Do we not hear the voice of God speaking to us in the deep

silence of our souls, and uttering itself in the events that are passing before us, bidding us awake from our slumbers, to cast away our doubts, and purify ourselves for the work of building up a pure Christianity upon the earth? Are not the fields every where white unto the harvest? and are there not all around us men and women, whose hearts God hath touched with holy fire, and who stand ready to enlist with us in this glorious cause? Let us, then, not falter, nor hesitate. What if our numbers are few, and the hosts of superstition and sin stand before us in menacing array? What are their boasts to us, when we know that the truth we promulgate is "a part of the celestial machinery of God," and that, "whoso puts that machinery in gear for mankind hath the Almighty to turn his wheel?"

"O, brother man! fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly, is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

"Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was 'doing good ;'
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

'Then shall all shackles fall ; the stormy clangor
Of wild war music o'er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace."

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, held at Old Kennett, Chester County, by adjournments, from the 22d to the 25th of Fifth Month, 1853.

JOSEPH A. DUGDALE, }
SIDNEY PEIRCE, } Clerks.

Our friend, JOSEPH A. DUGDALE, being present with us, the truthful and luminous Exposition of Sentiments put forth by the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, recently held at "Old Kennett," Chester County, was presented and read. The magnitude and importance of the principles embraced, and their appositeness to the present wants of society, were deeply felt; and this meeting earnestly recommends to its members their co-operation in the circulation of the document.

Signed by direction of the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends, held in Waterloo, Seneca County, N. Y., from the 5th to the 7th of the Sixth month, inclusive, 1853.

THOMAS MCCLINTOCK, }
RHODA DE GARMO, } Clerks.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

IN answer to various inquiries, and to remove any misapprehension that may exist as to the scope of the organization whose sentiments are set forth in this pamphlet, the Publishing Committee of the Yearly Meeting feel themselves authorized to state, that, as they understand the matter, the name of "FRIENDS" was adopted in no technical or narrow sense, and with no desire or intention that the new Society should be identified with, or limited by, the *sectarian peculiarities* of older associations; but in the broad, primary, and comprehensive meaning of the word, as it was employed by Jesus when he said: "I have called you *friends*;—Ye are my *friends* if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John 15: 14, 15. We desire to embrace all, of whatever name or denomination, who are attracted by the fundamental principles herein set forth. It was thought by those who proposed this name, that notwithstanding it might be liable, for a time, to be misunderstood in some quarters, it was, upon the whole, less objectionable than any other that was suggested; and that, if the Association should be faithful to the principles it adopted and the objects it proposed to itself, the name would speedily be redeemed from all narrow and sectarian associations.

JOSEPH A. DUGDALE,
SIDNEY PETRICE,
OLIVER JOHNSON,

H. M. DARLINGTON,
SALLIE CHANDLER,
CALEB S. JACKSON,

WILLIAM BARNARD.

LIST OF MEETINGS

Established on the Basis set forth in this Pamphlet.

YEARLY MEETINGS.

THE YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS, who have adopted the Congregational plan of Church order, at Green Plain, Clark Co., Ohio, meets in the latter part of the Tenth month.

THE YEARLY MEETING OF CONGREGATIONAL FRIENDS, at Waterloo, Seneca Co., N. Y., meets on the first First day in the Sixth month.

THE OHIO YEARLY MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS, at Salem, Columbiana Co., meets on the last Seventh day in the Ninth month.

MICHIGAN YEARLY MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS, at ——. Meeting occurs soon after that in Ohio, probably the next week.

PENNSYLVANIA YEARLY MEETING OF PROGRESSIVE FRIENDS. Time and place of next meeting to be determined by a Committee.

THE MILTON YEARLY MEETING, established at Milton, Ulster County, N. Y. Its arrangements in respect to meetings not known.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS.

Besides the Yearly Convocations, there are several Quarterly Meetings, established upon a similar basis, viz:

WESTERN QUARTERLY MEETING, held at Kennett Square, Chester Co., Pa., on the last Seventh days of the First, Fourth, Seventh and Tenth months.

SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING, in Ohio. Times of meeting not known.

INDIANA QUARTERLY MEETING, recently formed in Wabash County, Indiana. Next meeting to be held at West Grove, Jay County, the first Seventh day in the Eighth month.

There may be other Quarterly Meetings, not included in this list, but the above are all that are now remembered.

WEEKLY MEETINGS.

WEEKLY FIRST DAY MEETINGS are known or believed to exist in Kennett Square or vicinity, Chester Co., Pa.; in Salem, Columbiana Co.—Fairmount, Stark Co.—Green Plain, Clark Co.—and Zanesfield, Logan Co., Ohio; in one or more places in Eastern Indiana; in Waterloo, Seneca Co., and Milton, Ulster Co., N. Y. There may, perhaps, be others, not now recollected.